

I have her advice. And I value her friendship, and I will have her friendship.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:55 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, President Bush referred to Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel. King Mohamed referred to Robert B. Zoellick, U.S. Trade Representative; and Margaret Tutwiler, U.S. Ambassador to Morocco.

### **Remarks Honoring the United States Winter Olympic and Paralympic Teams**

*April 23, 2002*

Thank you all. Please be seated. Welcome to the south grounds of the White House. It's an honor to have you all here. Before I get started, I was wondering if anybody had their cell phone so I could speak to their mother. *[Laughter]*

It is a great honor to host our Nation's Olympic and Paralympic athletes here at the White House. I've really been looking forward to this day. In February you showed the entire world the best of the American spirit. You competed with honor; you won with humility; and you made America proud. On behalf of all Americans, congratulate—I congratulate you and thank you for inspiring our country.

It's good to welcome Mitt Romney back to the White House. Mitt, you did a fabulous job. I appreciate Lloyd Ward, the CEO of the U.S. Olympic Committee, for being here. Thank you, Lloyd. And Sandy Baldwin, the president of the U.S. Olympic Committee—it's good to see both of you again. I want to thank Mel Martinez, who is a member of my Cabinet, for coming today. Mel, thank you for being here.

And I'm glad to see Congressman Jim Ryun, who knows a little something about Olympics, a silver medalist who participated in the '64, '68, and '72 Olympics. Thank you for coming. I appreciate Tristan and Manuel being up here with me.

Americans will remember the 2002 games because we had the honor of hosting them, because the level of competition was so high, and because we had the thrill of seeing our

fellow Americans perform at the highest level and achieve unprecedented success.

We watched a lot of our stars, a lot of our fellow citizens. Sarah Hughes—I was pleased to see her go from shock to joy as she learned she had won her first gold medal at the age of 16 years old. We cheered for Jim Shea, who just weeks after his grandfather's death followed in his victorious footsteps by winning a gold medal. We shared in the pride of Vonn Flowers, whose gold medal in bobsledding made her the first African-American to win a gold medal in an Olympic winter games. A lot of us had Ohno fever. *[Laughter]*

And then America's Paralympics overcame great odds to excel in their sports. Sarah Will took home four gold medals in skiing, despite the fact that she's paralyzed from the waist down. Sarah Billmeier lost her left leg at 5 years old and this year skied away with a gold and two silvers. And Manuel Guerra contacted polio as an infant. This disease left him disabled in his left leg, but he pursued his love of hockey, and this year he and his teammates won the gold in sledge hockey.

All of your victories required hard work and skill and the determination to meet your goals. They also required great support. The honors you won are a tribute to devoted coaches and trainers, to loving parents who sacrificed to help you realize your dreams, to friends and supporters, and to more than 30,000 volunteers who helped make the Salt Lake games possible.

We've always supported our athletes here in America. But this year we looked at them with even greater pride and even more hope. You served as symbols of unity and strength and determination and of a peaceful competition and cooperation with people from all around the world. It was an important time for America, and you didn't let us down.

Our 2002 Olympians and Paralympians showed tremendous character. These teams were uniquely American. After all, we had firefighters on our team; we had members of the Armed Services; we've got community volunteers. And your commitment to your communities will serve you well as champions. You see, you're now more than athletes; you're role models—role models to children who dream of winning a gold medal

themselves, role models to young people who need someone to look up to, someone to set a positive example for how they should live their lives and how they should treat others.

This is a big responsibility, but the good news is you've all proven that you're up to the challenge. I want to thank you for representing the highest ideals of our Nation and for making America so proud.

May God bless you all, and may God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:36 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mitt Romney, president and chief executive officer, Salt Lake Organizing Committee for the 2002 winter Olympic games; Olympic gold medalists Tristan Gale, women's skeleton, Sarah Hughes, women's figure skating, Jim Shea, men's skeleton, Vonetta Flowers, women's bobsledding, and Apolo Anton Ohno, men's short track speedskating; and Paralympic gold medalists Manuel Guerra, Jr., goalie for the ice sledge hockey team, and Sarah Will and Sarah Billmeier, women's skiing. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

## **Proclamation 7546—National Park Week, 2002**

*April 23, 2002*

*By the President of the United States  
of America*

### **A Proclamation**

Our national park system helps preserve our history, heritage, and the natural beauty of our Nation for the enjoyment of all our citizens and many international visitors. Thanks to our park system, many of these treasures retain their original beauty and grandeur. The parks are places for recreation, education, and reflection, and we must take care of them in a way that preserves them for posterity.

In 1872, the Congress established in the Territories of Montana and Wyoming what we all know now as Yellowstone National Park. This beautiful area later became the first to be designated as a national park. Our national park system was established in 1916 to protect and maintain our natural resources and historic sites. Today, there are 385 na-

tional parks on 84 million acres, visited annually by 280 million people from around the world.

My Administration's "National Parks Legacy Project" was initiated to ensure proper care for our national park system. Through thoughtful and diligent efforts, the National Parks Legacy Project will enhance the parks' ecosystems, improve outdoor opportunities, address infrastructure needs, and establish accountability through performance goals. The National Parks Legacy Project and other actions such as our support for the Everglades Restoration Plan and our request to fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund are important steps to support existing and future parks, vital habitats, and threatened ecosystems. I have asked the Secretary of the Interior to prepare an annual report on the conditions of our national parks and to offer specific recommendations for improvements.

We must also pay tribute to the role that the dedicated 20,000 men and women of the National Park Service play in preserving our parks. Each day these professionals and more than 120,000 volunteers work to make national parks accessible, safe, educational, and well maintained. Their job is critical to the future of our parks and national treasures, and America is grateful.

**Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush,** President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 22 through April 28, 2002, as National Park Week. I call upon all the people of the United States to join me in recognizing the importance of national parks and to learn more about these areas of beauty and their historical importance.

**In Witness Whereof,** I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-third day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand two, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-sixth.

**George W. Bush**

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NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on April 25.